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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/15/2026
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: LOW-PROFILE HAMAS DELEGATION VISITS TURKISH HUMAN
RIGHTS/AID ORGANIZATIONS

Classified by DCM Nancy McEldowney; reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: A four-person delegation of Hamas members arrived in Turkey June 8 and met with NGO representatives and an MP. The Turkish press covered the visit, though not extensively. We raised the issue on a cautionary note with a leader of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), who stressed that the GOT leadership has played no role in the visit. End summary.

¶2. (U) A four-member delegation of Hamas members arrived in Istanbul June 8 and traveled to Ankara June 9. Delegation members included: Isam Judah, a leader of the Cebaliye refugee camp; Muhammed Sihab, Palestinian MP; Kafernah (full name not provided), mayor of Beyt Hanun; and Abu Amshah, deputy mayor of Beyt Hanun. The visit was reportedly organized by Insani Yardim Vakfi (The Foundation for Human Rights and Freedoms and Humanitarian Relief - IYV). According to its website, it is an Istanbul-based humanitarian and human rights foundation.

¶3. (C) We spoke with AKP vice chair Saban Disli, who told us that IYV is a branch of Mazlum-Der, an Islam-oriented human rights NGO in Turkey. Disli was alerted to the delegation's visit by the media and a subsequent call from the Israeli Embassy. Mazlum-Der and IYV had earlier been involved in sending charity goods at Ramadan to a refugee camp and the city the delegation represented. The Palestinians asked to visit Turkey to gather clothing and food aid. Asked about how their visas had been issued, Disli said he had not looked into that aspect, but that if people were coming for humanitarian reasons, that would be sufficient to issue a visa. The parliamentarian would not have required a visa.

¶4. (C) The delegation met with AKP MP Huseyin Tanriverdi, chairman of the parliamentary Turkey-Palestine friendship group. Disli had asked Tanriverdi point blank if he had invited the group. Tanriverdi told Disli he had not, and that he had said as much to several media outlets. Some press accounts carry that denial; others claim Tanriverdi invited the delegation. Per Disli, Tanriverdi had been invited to meet with the group, and did so over coffee at Hizmet Is labor union offices (Tanriverdi is a former union

official) because he did not want the meeting to take place at parliament. The Palestinians then asked to go to Friday prayers; Tanriverdi accompanied them. The delegation also met with Ayhan Bilgen, vice president of Mazlum-Der. They held a press conference at the Mazlum-Der office in Ankara.

¶15. (C) We pointed out the need to be careful; it did not look good to have any Hamas-related delegation here, and it would be unwise to replay the earlier problems, especially with official visits in the offing. Disli agreed. It would, he said, be "stupid" to spark further controversy. The delegation is currently in Istanbul and will give another press conference at Mazlum-Der offices there. Tanriverdi was invited to attend that press conference; Disli asked that he not do so. MFA officials had not been aware of the visit until they read about it in the press.

¶16. (U) The Palestinian representative in Ankara reportedly was not informed of the visit.

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